

# Empowering women in UNISON

---

UNISON National Women's  
Committee

---

Annual Report 2021/22

---



# National Women's Committee Annual Report 2021/22

<b>Introduction</b>	2
<b>National women's committee report</b>	7
<b>Regional reports</b>	20
<b>Reports from national women's committee/conference delegates</b>	
Special delegate conference	35
National disabled members' conference	36
Special Energy service group conference	38
Special Water, Environment and Transport service group conference	38
Special Local government service group conference	39
TUC women's conference	41
TUC Congress	41
<b>Appendix 1 : Membership of the national women's committee 2021/22</b>	44
<b>Appendix 2 : Constitution of the national women's committee</b>	45
<b>Appendix 3 : Attendance at meetings of the national women's committee</b>	46
<b>Appendix 4 : Glossary</b>	47
<b>Appendix 5 : UNISON resources supporting women members</b>	49

## Introduction

I wish you all a very warm welcome to the national women's conference. At the time of writing this introduction, we are planning for our physical conference to be held in Edinburgh, though we will be guided by the progress of the Covid 19 pandemic. In the event that the conference takes place, I hope that you will find your time in Edinburgh interesting, informative and inspiring and that you will make the most of the opportunity to meet other women activists and friends, and to be inspired by their stories over the next few days.

It has been an honour to chair the committee over the last 2 years, more so as we have all had to adjust to a different way of working, and I have enjoyed seeing the women's agenda take centre stage in UNISON – a union where almost 4 out of 5 members are women.

Women have borne the brunt of relentless government attacks on public sector jobs and services since 2010 – nearly twelve years! The lowest paid and most vulnerable in our society continue to suffer the most. UNISON leads the way in so many areas. We're the union that's proud to lead the campaign against low pay, about the gender pay gap and sexual harassment; that fights privatisation and cuts to public services. However, we still have a great deal to do to improve both women's working lives and in society.

It is very important that we continue to support and develop our women activists to ensure that they take their proper place in our union, as leaders and campaigners – and the National Women's Committee is committed to doing this.

As the UK's biggest union, we intend to keep growing greater and better and more courageous in the years to come.

As I write this report, we are seeing the effects on society of the UK's exit from the EU, with disruptions to the supply chain manifesting itself in empty shelves and increasing pressures on our families but whatever lies ahead, we are committed to ensuring that women's voices are heard and women's rights are protected. Many of our members' rights are extremely vulnerable to future changes, which will have a disastrous impact on the women themselves and those of us (and our families) who rely on their support.

This last year has been hard on many of you. For those working on the frontline in the Health sector; care sectors; local government; the service sectors, all of you have demonstrated your commitment to working for the good of all. Especially crucial has been the support you give to your families, whether it is home schooling children, caring for elderly or vulnerable family members, or helping in your communities.

Our conference gives us the chance to voice those concerns, and to demand action. It brings together women from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors, and women representing the full diversity of our membership.

It also sets the work plan for the women's committee for the next 12 months. The hopes and challenges faced by women throughout the UK and internationally will be shared during our conference, through your contributions to the debate. We know that when we meet with policy makers and politicians, your shared experiences provide us with the resolve we need to demand and to drive change for the better.

I hope you also take the time to network, to socialise and to have fun. It is important that we recognise that there are times when being a union rep is hard work, and to reward ourselves when we can – and to remind ourselves why we do it!

I wish you all a great conference; look forward to the debate, to hearing women share their stories, and to working alongside you in our union to create a better society for all women.

Emma Procter  
Chair, national women's committee

# NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

The work of the national women's committee is underpinned by UNISON's objectives and priorities:

## UNISON's Objectives

UNISON, the largest union in the UK and one that is also growing, will seek to represent all our members wherever they work and whatever they do and campaign for the services they provide. We will call for additional funding across all public services to address social need.

### Our key objectives are:

#### 1. Recruitment and organising

- Enhance our capability to recruit and retain members and meet the organising and representation challenges facing the union in the changing world of work.
- Ensure our union is relevant to all members who provide public services – including those who work in the community and private sectors.
- Identify and develop leadership and encourage union activism from across the union, particularly among young members and provide support and resources for them to lead campaigns
- Enhance our democracy by increasing and widening participation of our activists and members.
- Identify strategic growth areas such as social care and under-5s education and implement a national organising strategy in those sectors
- Encourage the recruitment of local stewards and Health & Safety representatives
- In all trade union activity to promote the benefits of the organising approach

#### 2. Bargaining and equalities

- Deliver increased funding for public services and secure real terms pay increases, improved terms and conditions, and high-quality employment and pensions for UNISON members.
- Build confidence for industrial action when required, identify and support strategic industrial disputes at national and branch level and seek to co-ordinate action wherever possible.
- Promote equal pay and equality in public, community and private sectors
- Actively challenge all forms of discrimination including racism and sexism; against LGBT+ people; against disabled people; and discrimination based on age, religion or social class.
- Provide support to migrant workers
- Bargaining and lobbying to end two-tier workforce in outsourced public services and rolling out a strategy to ensure national agreements are awarded to outsourced workers
- Provide assistance to those branches supporting outsourced members
- Campaign for better facility time arrangements for our members in public services

#### 3. Campaigning and influencing

- Campaign against climate change and work with other relevant organisations to achieve a net-zero carbon economy in the UK at the earliest opportunity and recognise that the

Climate emergency is a trade union issue and commit to sharing our values in order to protect our planet.

- Develop our campaigns in support of quality publicly owned public services and in defence of the NHS, education, local government, social care, police, probation, Energy, WET and all public services including private and community sector
- Build our political influence, forging alliances with other unions and appropriate campaigning and community groups to challenge the austerity programme, including attacks on the welfare state.
- Campaign for the election of UK governments and councils that value public services and working people, rejecting the arguments of the Tory government and far right parties.
- Promote the new political fund arrangements to increase participation and opt-in.
- Promote the union's international work.

#### 4. Building an efficient and effective union

- Ensure that the union's structures including organisational, lay member, ICT infrastructure, digital and internal management systems and the distribution of our resources are accessible, efficient and effective to meet the changing needs of all sections of the union and its members especially in relation to global sustainability and to include the ability to take effective industrial action when required
- A root and branch review of the union's structure and operations taking account of climate change including travel, waste and efficiency
- Ensure that branches are provided with the support they need, promptly, when they need it

The committee does not work in isolation, but with the regional women's groups and networks, other departments and committees in the union, and in partnership with organisations who share our aims.

This report summarises that work, and hopefully provides some inspiration for your campaigning, recruiting and organising work in 2022 and beyond.

There are many sources of information, including the UNISON website. The women's pages can be found here: [www.unison.org.uk/women](http://www.unison.org.uk/women). In addition the women's Facebook page [www.facebook.com/unisonwomen](https://www.facebook.com/unisonwomen) and Twitter account @womeninUNISON are used to share information about the campaigns we support, the groups we are working with and activities we are participating in. Please 'like' our page, follow us on Twitter and join in with our social media campaigning.

We would also encourage you to become involved in the UNISON organising space. The organising space is a secure, safe online resource developed to support our activist and organising communities. It aims to support building relationships, sharing knowledge, learning and experiences. You can join here: <https://organisingspace.unison.org.uk>

Information is also circulated to and through regional women's networks; also to activists through the equality e-bulletin and e-focus. Articles on many of the issues raised have also appeared in the UNISON journals, on the UNISON main website and various social media.

UNISON is affiliated to a wide range of groups and where possible we have worked with them as well as local, regional and national community groups.





# National women’s committee report

As a consequence of the pandemic, it was not possible to hold an in-person National Women’s Conference in February 2021. Instead, National Women’s Committee organised a series of successful webinars with the theme of, ‘Empowering Women in UNISON’. However, a preliminary agenda had been agreed by the Standing Orders Committee in anticipation that the conference would take place. Therefore, NWC agreed to consider the motions where there was existing UNISON policy and worked in smaller groups to progress actions. This work is reported in sections, as follows:

- **Campaigning – women & the workplace**
- **Campaigning – violence against women and girls**
- **Campaigning – women’s health**
- **Campaigning – addressing the impact of Covid**
- **Equalities**

## Joint working

The committee also recognises that many of the motions to national women’s conference referred to joint working with other SOGs. Uniquely, the women's committee has representatives from all the other SOGs and the national young members' forum and we continue to work to improve those links and ensure wherever possible that we liaise with other involved groups.

## *Women and the workplace*

Motion 1: Low paid does not mean low skilled - Campaign for a Real Living Wage

Highlighted that that low paid key workers have had all the stress of working through COVID 19, that much of this has been done with little or no public recognition, and that on top of this, they have struggled to survive financially. Expressed sadness that ‘women’s work’ remains undervalued even though the responsibility and demands have increased exponentially over the years.

Called on National Women’s Committee (NWC) to work within Unison structures and with external campaigning bodies to raise awareness of the work undertaken by women in low-paid jobs. To campaign for recognition of the work undertaken by these women and for respect, and for a real living wage for all women.

AIM	UPDATE
NWC to work to raise awareness of and campaign for recognition of the work undertaken by low-paid women.	<p>NWC has worked across the union to ensure that external and member facing communications consistently raise the issue of low-pay and highlight the work of low paid women workers.</p> <p>UNISON’s message for government is clear. That no one delivering public services should be on low wages.</p>

	<p>UNISON has called for government departments, devolved nations and local authorities to have the funding necessary to provide a decent pay rise and for a national minimum wage of £10 an hour.</p> <p>UNISON has also identified the additional costs of working from home, campaigned for accessible and affordable childcare and highlighted the scandal of public service staff having to rely on food banks and campaigned about unacceptable cuts in universal credit.</p> <p>A project has been set up to increase participation in the union of women members that carry out roles like care workers, cleaners, cooks, domestics, administrators, librarians and school support staff, all low-paid women.</p>
--	---

#### **Motion 4: Make PPE for women's bodies**

Highlighted how the majority of personal protective equipment (PPE) is based on the sizes and characteristics of male populations and how as a result, PPE can impact on a woman's work and her safety.

Called on NWC to work with the national health and safety committee to develop the #BeOnTheSafeSide Campaign to include: 1) The need for women's issues to be recognised as health and safety issues 2) The need to make PPE for women's bodies 3) Encouraging women to come forward as health and safety reps, recognising that having more women health and safety rep results in safer workplaces for women.

<b>AIM</b>	<b>UPDATE</b>
NWC to liaise with H&S Committee to ensure raising awareness of women's health and safety issues, campaigning for the right PPE and encouraging more women to become safety reps is embedded in UNISON's #BeOnTheSafeSide campaign.	<p>Women's health and safety and wellbeing are at the heart of the #BeOnTheSafeSide campaign. As part of the campaign UNISON held a webinar on the menopause and the workplace to coincide with 18<sup>th</sup> October World Menopause Day with the National Women's Officer making the opening presentation.</p> <p>UNISON's annual Health and Safety Seminar for 2022 will be held on International Women's Day 8<sup>th</sup> March and will feature sessions on domestic abuse, sexual harassment and health and safety for</p>

	<p>pregnant workers.</p> <p>UNISON set out how personal protective equipment (PPE) is an equality issue in evidence to the parliamentary women and equalities committee in May 2020, highlighting how important it is for women to have correctly fitting equipment -designed specifically for women. We take every opportunity to stress this including in our submission to the Department of Health and Social Care on a Women's Health Strategy in June 2021.</p>
--	---

## ***Campaigning: violence against women and girls***

### **Motion 2: Working women and the financial implications in trying to gain access to a refuge**

Noted that a woman fleeing domestic abuse will be expected to fund the cost of refuge if she earns above the threshold to claim housing benefit. Highlighted the problems this is causing particularly if women are subjected to economic abuse.

Called on NWC to 1) approach UNISON's welfare charity "There for You" to determine possible measures that could be put in place to financially assist women who need to access a refuge but are unable to meet the costs of doing so, 2) lobby the UK and respective devolved governments to provide the necessary support to allow all women, irrespective of earnings, to access a safe place of refuge away from an abusive relationship.

<b>AIM</b>	<b>UPDATE</b>
NWC to explore the possibility of financial support (from UNISON's There for You) for women who wish to access a Refuge but who are above the housing benefits threshold.	<p>There is already a scheme in place to support victims of domestic abuse. This can be in a number of ways including financially assisting women who need to access a refuge but are unable to meet the costs of doing so.</p> <p>Other types of assistance provided includes providing household goods and clothing if a member has had to flee a relationship.</p> <p>The There for You charity has a priority system in place and such cases are always given a high priority so that they are assessed quickly.</p>
And to lobby and campaign for government support to allow all women, irrespective of	The new Domestic Abuse Act provides a statutory duty on local authorities to fund

earnings, to access a safe place of refuge.	support in ‘accommodation based’ services. A significant gap is that the law does not use the word “refuge. It is crucial that the guidance and regulations underpinning this duty make crystal clear that local authorities must fund specialist women’s refuges. UNISON continues to lobby and campaign with women’s organisations for all women irrespective of earnings to be able to access a safe refuge.
---	---

### **Motion 5: #ustoo #thisisnotworking**

Welcomed UNISON’s #UsToo campaign launched at the 2020 National Women’s Conference but also expressed a wish that more work should be done around the #ThisIsNotWorking campaign, which Unison is part of. Also expressed concern that there is no clear guidance around acceptable behaviour for “virtual meetings”.

Called on NWC to work with the appropriate Unison committees, and external bodies to:

Develop a guidance and model policy around sexual harassment during video calls.  
Build and implement a toolkit for branch officers that includes: Advice which is inclusive for all women on how to support a member who wants to report a negative experience; leaflets and posters to advertise external agencies that branches can signpost and support confidentially; campaign for a sexual harassment at work charter, similar to the violence at work charter; work with Learning and Organising services to provide inclusive training for activists on sexual harassment, considering other protected characteristics.

<b>AIM</b>	<b>UPDATE</b>
NWC to develop guidance and a model policy around sexual harassment and video calls and a toolkit aimed at branch officers.	UNISON launched its campaign and comprehensive guidance on sexual harassment at National Women’s Conference in February 2020 and called for a new, easily enforceable, legal duty on employers to prevent sexual harassment after years of campaigning, by UNISON and as part of the #ThisIsNotWorking alliance – a TUC-led coalition of unions, women’s rights bodies and business organisations - the government finally announced their intention to introduce a mandatory duty on employers to protect staff from sexual harassment in July. UNISON has welcomed the announcement. UNISON’s guidance will be reviewed in light of this development and will also be expanded to take account of harassment in a home-working

	environment uncovered during the pandemic.
--	--

### **Motion 7: Covid-19 and domestic abuse**

Highlighted how as early as April 2020, a briefing from the End Violence Against Women Coalition (EVAWC) set out how the COVID-19 pandemic was likely to lead to increased levels of violence against women and girls in the UK. Set out how a report released in August 2020 by Women's Aid confirmed the predictions of the EVAWC briefing. Commented on UNISON's track record of campaigning on domestic abuse and working with employers to develop policies supporting women experiencing domestic abuse and that many of these now need updating in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Called on NWC to 1) work internally in UNISON, including with Labour Link, and with recognised external organisations to seek improvements to the funding and support available to women experiencing domestic abuse 2) raise awareness of the devastating impact of Covid-19 on domestic abuse 3) work with UNISON's training and welfare sections to update training and advice for branches/representatives 4) campaign for mandatory training for managers/HR on how to support women experiencing domestic abuse.

<b>AIM</b>	<b>UPDATE</b>
NWC to campaign for better funding and support for women experiencing domestic abuse and update our resources for branches/ reps.	UNISON worked with Jess Phillips MP, as Shadow Minister for Domestic Violence and Safeguarding, as the Domestic Abuse Bill went through the various legislative stages in Parliament and became Law in April. We worked with organisations that support victims like Women's Aid and divided up lobbying between us so we each focused on changes to the Bill which we thought we could influence most. We were very successful in achieving recognition in the Act that domestic abuse is a workplace matter and winning an amendment that protects victims at work. UNISON's guidance, resources and training materials will be updated to reflect the new statutory guidance as soon as this is published.

## ***Campaigning - women's health***

### **Motion 3: Endometriosis in the workplace**

Set out that over 1.5 million women and transgender men in the UK are affected by endometriosis and how this impacts on lost working time that could be reduced if staff were supported to have an open conversation with their employer about working with this condition.

Called on NWC to work with regions to raise awareness and issue guidance on developing a local endometriosis policy to ensure members who live with endometriosis have the best possible support in their workplace.

<b>AIM</b>	<b>UPDATE</b>
NWC to develop guidance for members with endometriosis.	<p>In June this year, we submitted our response to a consultation by the Department of Health and Social Care (England) on a women's health strategy.</p> <p>We said 'Just as with the menopause, for some women, reproductive health issues can cause particular difficulties at work and may even lead to discriminatory action by employers' and set out that Endometriosis is the second most common gynaecological condition in the UK.</p> <p>Our submission calls for the government to include advice and guidance for employers on workplace policies on reproductive health in the Women's Health Strategy.</p>

### **Motion 10: Covid-19 impact on female health screening**

Highlighted how the pandemic led to withdrawal and scaling back of health monitoring across the country and the impact on women in particular e.g. one million scheduled mammogram appointments pushed back by months as well as one million smear tests being missed.

Called on NWC to 1) Work with Labour Link to lobby government to increase funding and support to clear backlogs created by Covid 19 2) Work with Labour Link and Unison National Health and Safety committee to lobby government for a strategic screening plan which can be implemented in the event of a future Health crisis.

<b>AIM</b>	<b>UPDATE</b>
NWC to campaign for recognition of the impact of Covid-19 on women's health and for strategic plans to address the health issues that have emerged.	In our response to a consultation by the Department of Health and Social Care (England) on a women's health strategy – submitted in June this year, we included a

	<p>section on <b>Learning from the pandemic.</b></p> <p>We said the Women’s Health Strategy will need to reflect on the experiences of women who have worked during the pandemic, whether at home or in their usual workplace and on the likely long-term implications for their physical and mental health.</p>
--	--

### **Motion 13: Impact Covid 19 Pandemic and Women's Mental Health**

Highlighted the toll taken by Covid 19 on women’s mental health and wellbeing in particular. Set out that there are many contributing factors but argued that lockdown restrictions, the requirement to work from home as well as school and nursery closures have had a particularly detrimental impact on women’s mental health. Stated that not enough is being done to highlight the link between women presenting with mental health and domestic abuse.

Called on NWC to 1) work with the Health Service Group (HSG) and LAOS to develop awareness training, highlighting that more women have pre-existing mental health issues 2) work with LAOS to roll out the awareness training and encourage branches to ensure that real flexible working is worked into workplace policies 3) produce leaflet on women mental health and to update the women’s health pack 4) work with Labour Link to get a robust women’s recovery programme.

<b>AIM</b>	<b>UPDATE</b>
NWC to campaign on women’s mental health including raising awareness with employers locally and ensuring it is a consideration in workplace policies.	<p>UNISON has updated bargaining guidance on mental health policies incorporating lessons learnt during the pandemic including women and mental health issues.</p> <p>In our response to a consultation by the Department of Health and Social Care (England) on a women’s health strategy – submitted in June this year, we also included a section on learning from the pandemic and particularly mental health issues.</p> <p>There is also a section which highlights the particular mental health issues that women experience. According to the Mental Health Foundation, in England, around one in five women has a common mental health problem such as anxiety or depression.</p> <p>We said UNISON would like to see recommendations about training for employers and managers in mental health, including a gender sensitive approach to mental health. Reasonable adjustments should be available to any member of staff</p>

	experiencing a mental health problem, not only those who qualify under the Equality Act, and should include consideration of working hours or patterns, the physical environment and support with workload, for example.
--	--

### **Motion 16: Decriminalise Abortion**

Noted that abortion in Britain is legal only if signed off by two doctors and that the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, which made abortion a criminal offence is still on the statute book.

Highlighted how due to medical advancements abortion can now be accessed safely by taking two pills and no longer needs to be carried out in a clinical setting – so-called telemedicine. Noted that during the pandemic the UK Government came under huge pressure to allow abortion pills to be taken at home as it was not possible to travel safely to a clinical setting. Recognised that for some women living in Northern Ireland however, it is still necessary to travel to access a safe abortion. Called for de-criminalisation of abortion and on NWC to raise awareness of the decriminalisation campaign.

<b>AIM</b>	<b>UPDATE</b>
NWC to Campaign on the decriminalisation of abortion, particularly in Northern Ireland.	<p>We have kept the pressure up on Northern Ireland Ministers from both national and Northern Ireland region levels.</p> <p>We wrote to the Minister in March regarding the failure to commission safe and accessible abortion services more than a year after abortion was made legal in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>We said we were concerned about women in Northern Ireland who are being forced to use unregulated abortion services and to travel to high-risk areas during the pandemic. We did not receive a reply.</p> <p>More recently, in the wake of the atrocious attack on abortion rights in Texas, we have campaigned and marched in solidarity with women in Texas and to draw attention for the potential for this attack on women's rights to spread internationally. Christina McAnea sent a powerful message of solidarity to the organisers of the #defendabortion march and rally in London on 2 October 2021.</p>



## ***Campaigning – addressing the impact of Covid***

### **Motion 8: The impact of Covid-19 on women**

Noted how the pandemic has deepened pre-existing inequalities for women. Highlighted appalling conditions and treatment of women in the workplace including lack of or inadequate personal protective equipment (PPE), a marked rise in discrimination against pregnant women and new mothers, migrant women disproportionately affected by job losses. Noted that women are more likely to be working on insecure or zero hours contracts (usually without sick pay) or working part time and that they are also more likely to be in single parent households and on a low income. Noted the huge impact on women of the closure of schools and nursery provision. Expressed concern about the horrifying increase in domestic abuse during the pandemic. Declared that as a union with an overwhelming majority of women members, Unison should be at the forefront of driving changes to prevent further harm to women.

Called on NWC 1) to work with regions and branches to conduct a survey to find out what support women need and to devise training for officers on appropriate support for women 2) lobby for improvements in support 3) work with the National Black Member's Committee and the National Disabled Member's Committee to highlight the additional disadvantages that women in these groups face 4) provide guidance for branches to negotiate better support for women in order to advance gender equality.

AIM	UPDATE
NWC to identify support required by working women in the aftermath of the pandemic and also any additional/different support needed by women who are also Black/disabled. Provide guidance for branches.	All UNISON's bargaining guidance relating to Covid-19 has equality matters at the heart.  Guidance on bargaining over workplace issues during the pandemic was updated in September 2021. New guidance on working from home and hybrid working was published in August 2021.  There is also separate guidance for pregnant workers and Covid-19 and advice for Black and vulnerable workers on risk assessment.

### **Motion 9: Covid and disabled women**

Noted how the pandemic has exposed and increased the pre-existing inequalities for disabled women. Highlighted the devastating impact of the universal credit system on disabled women including exacerbating stress, mental health and disability.

Called on NWC to work with relevant committees to 1) provide information, guidance and training for regions, branches and stewards to enable them to support disabled women members during and after the COVID-19 crisis 2) lobby for changes to the unfair Universal Credit system 3) work with the National Disabled Members Committee on their work related to working from home as a reasonable adjustment 4) work with regional women's committees to identify concerns for disabled

women members in order to improve support and guidance 5) Report progress to the next National Women's Conference.

AIM	UPDATE
NWC to work with the National Disabled Members Committee on their work related to working from home as a reasonable adjustment and improve support and guidance.	<p>Right back at the start of the pandemic, National Disabled Members Committee worked with UNISON's Bargaining Unit to produce guidance to help reps to support members who were shielding.</p> <p>UNISON consistently advised both shielded members and those in the vulnerable group to work from home - and if this was not possible to contact their UNISON rep.</p> <p>When COVID restrictions were lifted and workers started to return to the workplace in the summer and autumn of 2020, UNISON produced guidance for disabled workers which focused on the risk assessment process and pushed for individual risk assessments for all disabled workers.</p> <p>As the COVID regulations have changed this guidance has been updated so that it remains effective.</p>

## **Motion 12: Women and the economic impact of Covid-19**

Highlighted that the majority of care for all dependants, children or adults, continues to be carried out by women and the huge disruption this has caused to the lives of working women. Noted that parents have no right to paid leave to respond to this increased demand and that although there is a right to make a flexible working request, one in three requests are turned down by employers. Noted that this combination means parents, most often women, are managing this situation by taking annual leave, unpaid leave, reducing hours where possible or resigning from employment. Expressed concern that women are being pushed out of the workforce and the gender pay gap will likely widen. Also noted that women are more likely to be employed in service sectors that have been hit hardest by social distancing measures and that as a consequence, the financial impact on women is worse.

Called on NWC to work with the NEC and Labour link to 1) protect the incomes of women who have no choice but to take on additional caring responsibilities, 2) call for investment in the childcare sector, 3) make flexible work the default, 4) abolish the earnings threshold for SSP and raise the rate of SSP, 5) end zero-hour contracts.

AIM	UPDATE
NWC to campaign and lobby around society's expectation that women are still	The government has postponed the long-promised Employment Bill indefinitely which

<p>the primary carer and for day one contractual rights to flexible working and improved parental and carer's leave. Call for investment in the childcare sector.</p>	<p>represents a lost opportunity for UNISON to lobby for day 1 rights to flexible working and improvements in parental and carers leave. However, the government is consulting on a proposal to introduce a new legal right to ask for flexible working, which they are arguing will mean a default to flexible working. In UNISON's response to this consultation, we argue that the proposal does not represent a default, anything but, and is no different from the existing right to request flexible working.</p> <p>In the meantime, UNISON negotiators are exploring every opportunity to agree rights to flexible working in national and local bargaining forums.</p> <p>UNISON has also identified the additional costs of working from home and campaigned for accessible and affordable childcare. The government pledged an additional £170 million for childcare providers in early years funding by 2024-25 in the Autumn Budget. However, the sector has warned that this sum will not be enough to make up the funding shortfall.</p> <p>During the pandemic UNISON highlighted how low statutory sick pay led to sick staff being forced to carry on working as they couldn't afford not to. UNISON believes that all workers should be treated fairly and receive adequate pay when they are ill. Along with the TUC, UNISON is campaigning for the government to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Scrap the minimum earnings threshold for statutory sick pay</li> <li>2. Increase the weekly level of sick pay to at least £320 per week</li> <li>3. Give employers the resources to afford sick pay for their workers</li> </ol>
---	---

## ***Equalities***

### **Motion 6: Incorporate CEDAW into domestic legislation**

Noted that the UK ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1986. However, the UK has not incorporated CEDAW into UK law which means that in practice it has 'no teeth'.

Called on NWC to work with the NEC and Labour Link to develop a campaign for the implementation of CEDAW into domestic legislation.

<b>AIM</b>	<b>UPDATE</b>
NWC to work with the NEC and Labour Link to develop a campaign for the implementation of CEDAW into domestic legislation.	Motions submitted to 2021 Labour Link forum and to the Labour Party Women's Conference seeking the implementation of CEDAW into domestic legislation.  Plans to submit a motion to TUC Women's Conference 2022.  Contact with Back260 and CEDAW People's tribunal to discuss joint campaigning.  Related campaign work seeking the implementation of ILO Convention 190 which is about work-related violence and harassment ratified and implemented by the UK government.

### **Motion 11: Improve affordable, good quality and accessible childcare and create awareness and understanding on how this issue continues to disproportionately affect women during Covid-19**

Noted that access to affordable childcare has been a long-standing challenge for women. Highlighted how the pandemic and lock-down restrictions have exposed and increased this challenge.

Called on NWC to work with relevant partners to 1) lobby for schemes to provide additional good quality childcare and support for existing nurseries and childminders so they continue to operate 2) work with regions and branches to raise awareness of the negative impact Covid-19 is having on women and their families accessing and maintaining childcare 3) undertake a survey about the childcare challenges women are facing their views regarding good quality, affordable and accessible childcare.

<b>AIM</b>	<b>UPDATE</b>
NWC to lobby and campaign about accessible and affordable childcare.	UNISON has highlighted the impact of Covid 19 on the statutory childcare sector including

	<p>cuts to jobs and some providers forced to close their doors.</p> <p>UNISON has also campaigned for accessible and affordable childcare, highlighting in UNISON's submission to the Treasury for the Autumn Budget statement, the importance of accessible childcare for post-Covid recovery.</p> <p>The government pledged an additional £170 million for childcare providers in early years funding by 2024-25 in the Autumn Budget. However, the sector has warned that this sum will not be enough to make up the funding shortfall.</p>
--	--

### **Motion 17: A Decade of the Equality Act 2010: time to Review Sex Discrimination law**

Noted that a decade has passed since the enactment of the 2010 Equality Act and that this is an important milestone to review how effective this legislation is. Highlighted a number of areas where this law is not working well including maternity discrimination and caring responsibilities. Also highlighted the failure by Government to enact Section 14 of the Equality Act 2010 so workers who identify with more than one equality characteristic are unable to bring a single claim on all relevant grounds. Also, Section 106 of the Equality Act 2010 which requires political parties to report the diversity of their candidates has not commenced.

Called on NWC to work with Labour Link to 1) campaign for a review of the Equality Act 2010 as it affects women 2) lobby and campaign to enact Section 14 of the Equality Act 2010.

<b>AIM</b>	<b>UPDATE</b>
NWC to lobby for reform of the Equality Act.	The opportunity to seek a review of the Equality Act has not yet arisen. In the meantime, UNISON has submitted a response to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) draft Strategic Plan, in September 2021, highlighting the failure of the Equality Act 2010 to deliver on its potential to eliminate employment discrimination. We said UNISON would like to see emphasis on EHRC holding employers to account in their strategic plan and clarity about how this can be improved by increasing capacity, through additional resources for EHRC and working in partnership with other organisations such as trade unions.

## REGIONAL REPORTS

### Eastern

The last 20 months have had a momentous impact on women in the workplace with the increase in home working and subsequent movement of many meetings, events and training to online. Although for many workplaces it is now BAU (business as usual), and for other workplaces has remained so throughout the pandemic, the knock on effect of the pandemic is still being felt and will continue for many more months and possibly years to come.

The Eastern Region Women's committee continues to support members throughout the pandemic by providing training and advice. The committee welcomed Daphne Lewis as the new Committee Secretary, who along with many other duties will be assisting the committee with their work. The committee would like to thank Daphne and Kerri Fuller for their efforts in helping the committee thus far.

The committee submitted a number of motions to the National Women's Conference for 2022 namely:

- The effect of the pandemic on women
- Improving affordable childcare
- Domestic Abuse

Members also expressed concern in other areas such as the new Police Bill, violence against women and the climate emergency, all important topics which will be discussed in future meetings.

Following a very difficult period the Committee continues to make progress in the region. The Committee looks forward to welcoming women back in person to its AGM and training event to be held on Saturday 4th December 2021 at the Holiday Inn in Colchester. This event has recruited very well.

Josie Irwin, National Women's Officer will be opening the event, and attendees will also have an opportunity to attend workshops on domestic abuse, and establishing a menopause policy in the workplace.

The Committee has established a partnership with a brilliant Community Interest Company called Alpha Vesta, who has organised a series of online workshops on Domestic Abuse specifically for UNISON members. These workshops have proved to be very popular with our members. The first workshop was held in July and attracted over a hundred applicants for a space of 32. Another was arranged shortly after for those on a waiting list in August. Feedback received was excellent, resulting in a further 3 day workshop organised in November. Additional workshops will be organised for the coming year.

As we head into 2022, members have expressed interest in other key training namely:

- Assertiveness
- Leadership
- Writing motions for Conference.

The committee has discussed the workplan from National Women's Committee and Domestic Abuse which would be one of the main areas needed to be taken forward and incorporated into the Committee's 2022 action plan.

### Greater London

2021 has been a challenging year for all our members. Due to Covid, it was only possible to hold the Regional Women's Committee (RWC) 2021 as a virtual AGM. The AGM for 2022 will be held on the 6<sup>th</sup> October where all key officer positions will be elected to. Representatives will also be appointed from the RWC to all the regional sub-committees and the LESE women's rights committee

where they will continue to play an active part in promoting and raising awareness of women's issues on behalf of UNISON. The women continue to take an active role region-wide, for example on regional council and regional committee as well as additional regional committees and working parties, ensuring that women's issues, proportionality and fair representation are a constant agenda item.

The RWC meets 4 times a year, including the AGM when the newly elected committee takes office. All service groups are represented on the committee and attendance continues to be good.

The RWC started to establish links through sponsorship of a project run by the Nicaraguan community movement which specifically assisted women in the community as they are the main carers for both children and the elderly in their families. La Concha is a town close to Managua. Nationwide, the MCN (multi-channel network) is the largest community-based organisation, and it has functioned as an autonomous group since the late 1980s. The last roofing project the RWC funded was in winter 2019 - spring 2020. It benefitted 24 families in the communities of El Rodeo, San Juan, Camilo Ortega, Juan Davila, 19 de Julio and Santiago which included 6 sheets of corrugated roofing material being donated to each family, providing much needed shelter. A speaker from the charity will be attending out next training and networking day.

The sixth annual Training & Networking event is planned to take place on the 12 November 2021. Invitations to the event will be widened to all elected branch officers who are women. The event will include presentation from Hestia, which support those who are experiencing domestic abuse, modern slavery and mental health needs. This will be followed by a workshop on understanding the effects of domestic abuse in the workplace and the benefits of having a domestic abuse

policy. There will also be an opportunity to meet our first ever woman General Secretary Christina McAnea which we are sure will be inspirational to all our women activist.

Work is ongoing to develop further local women's committees or forums based on the previous NDC motion. Women activists continue to organise local events and ongoing campaigns within their branches such as women members' meetings to encourage women to become more involved in the union as well as encouraging women into leadership roles in UNISON. 2021 has seen an increase in both stewards and health & safety reps being elected and trained in the region, particularly amongst women. We will be working with the region to see how we can support and encourage even more women to become active in the union.

## **Northern**

Despite the challenges prevented by Covid-19 the Northern Women's Network have continued to find new ways to work and organise virtually.

The work of the network has included:

Continuing to share best practice and new ideas for the recruitment and organisation of women to and within UNISON

Event Covid-19 and the women's agenda, with speakers including Gloria Mills and Christine McAnea, to explore the disproportionate impact of the economic fallout from Covid-19 on women.



A focused campaign to recruit and train women health & safety officers as part of the national Be On the Safe Side Campaign. The campaign worked with branches and organisers. It has been a success in that the majority of health and safety officers within the Northern region are now women.



An event for international women's day 2021 focused on creating a Gender Equal Economy. We also celebrated the international theme of #ChooseToChallenge



The network have progressed their campaign around CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of discrimination against women), by taking a motion to regional Labour Link, which was then taken to national Labour Link.

Representatives from the network attended the WASPI silent rally event at Conservative Party conference in October 2021.



The network would like to thank our Regional Convenor - Nicky Ramanandi, Deputy Convenor - Linda Hobson and Regional secretary - Clare Williams, for their continued support and look forward to the coming year, in supporting our union with priorities identified at the various conferences, further developing our work with the other self organised groups and working more with branches to develop the wider work of self organisation and recognising the valuable roles we all hold.

## Northern Ireland

The Women's Committee has 52 members representing 25 branches. In 2020/2021, Committee members participated extensively



in a wide range of organising and campaigning activity. The Committee has held 4 briefings this year to date. Deborah Yapicioz and Anne McVicker remain Joint Chairs.

Participation: Work has progressed developing local women's committees within the Western, Northern, Belfast and Southern Trust areas, based on the NDC motion. Women's Committee members continue to organise local events and ongoing campaigns within their branches. All branches in NI this year participated in womens' committee events.



Conferences and committees: This year's Conference in February was a live online event – "Empowering women lives" and covered:

- women's Rights under threat – in the workplace and in wider society;
- empowering Women Internationally and what we can learn from the struggle for women's rights and campaigns in other countries;
- empowering pregnant workers, new mums and working mums with caring responsibilities and how we can achieve flexibility in working arrangements;
- empowering older workers and preventing pension poverty, showing what UNISON is doing to ensure the voices of older workers and retired members are heard;
- empowering victims / survivors of domestic abuse in the workplace;
- getting women into political influencing roles (*Anne McVicker, Joint Chair of the Regional and National Women's*

*Committee was a guest speaker at this session);*

- empowering black women in the workplace – equality in the post Covid world of work;
- empowering women in social care (and low paid work).

UNISON women members are represented on the ICTU Women's Committee by Deborah Yapicioz and Danielle McCusker, who was recently elected as the Vice Chair. The work programme and the priority issues North and South include:

- Parental Leave / paid;
- Maternity Leave / better terms;
- Paternity Leave;
- Domestic Violence Leave;
- Carers Leave;
- Paid domestic violence leave, carers leave, and bereaved workers leave
- Apply to all workers regardless of employment status;
- Promote NIC ICTU position paper on childcare. Advocate for position through participation on Childcare for All and within the Childcare APG;
- Menopause awareness, policies, and support system - Advocate for systems of support in workplaces, particularly paid leave for those who have experienced or are experiencing Domestic and Sexual Violence;
- Advocate for legislative changes to strengthen protection against workplace sexual harassment;
- Promotion of workplace policies and good practice;
- Requirement to report sexual harassment under RIDDOR;
- Mandatory duties on employers to prevent sexual harassment;
- Mandatory training of managers and HR professionals;
- Protection from 3<sup>rd</sup> party harassment;
- Supporting Women in unions with the Women and leadership programmes;

- Delivering on Equal pay - Campaigning on the Gender pay gap reporting-implement regulations, include strategy and action plan within the Gender pay transparency measures: advocate for GPT measures within GPG reporting regulations;
- Lobbying work - Meet with NI Assembly Women's Caucus; meet with the Ad Hoc Committee 1325; Write to MLAs in run up to election.

Patricia McKeown, Anne Speed and Danielle McCusker attended the virtual TU Women's Council of the Isles hosted by the Scottish Trade Union Congress in February 2021. The event was an excellent opportunity to get together as Trade Union women to reflect on the year, listen and learn about the array of activities that had taken place by each Centre for women, and build on collective efforts and strength to build fairer, safer and more equal workplaces and world for women and girls. As well as several opportunities for discussion, questions and debate, each Trade Union Centre was given the platform to present on the day. The next Women's Council of the Isles is scheduled for November 2021.

The Regional Women's Committee 2021 Work programme covers:

- ensuring the participation of women at all levels in the union;
- tackling violence against women - including domestic violence and abuse, human trafficking and combating sexual harassment at work;
- ongoing campaigning for reform of legislation on reproductive rights, including abortion;
- highlighting the disproportionate impact of austerity on women - supporting gender budgeting and reflecting our demands on the bargaining agenda;
- campaigning for a comprehensive, affordable childcare strategy in policy and in practice through bargaining;

- ensuring that the bargaining agenda reflects women's health needs;
- WASPI women's campaign;
- supporting the campaign for Violence against Women and Girls Strategy;
- campaigning for misogyny as a hate crime;
- relationships, sexuality education in schools (RSE).

Menopause Policy - UNISON has worked alongside the Education Authority to produce the very first Menopause Policy that was launched on International Women's Day on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

UNISON wrote to all Teaching Unions asking for their support to raise awareness, promote diversity in the workplace and ensure that all staff in schools and other educational settings have access to the policy, emphasising the importance that Trade Unions alongside employers lead the way in removing any old-fashioned stigmas about the menopause and treat it sympathetically as they would any other illness, condition, or impairment.



16 Days of Action –To mark International 'End Violence Against Women and Girls' day, UNISON Northern Ireland Women's Committee hosted an online event 'Normal was never good enough', where they discussed domestic abuse as a workplace issue.

According to Women's Aid, more than 1 in 5 employed women are experiencing domestic abuse. UNISON Northern Ireland has set up a working group to see which employers have a domestic abuse policy in place, and training will be established on how to support members experiencing domestic abuse.

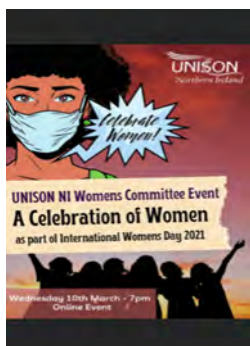
Following the work by UNISON and the EA on the Domestic Violence Policy, training was arranged for all Managers. Through negotiation it was agreed that this training was to be extended for union stewards. Six stewards from each of our branches attended the training which was delivered by Women's Aid.

UNISON also sent correspondence to the EA in relation to paid time off for members affected by domestic violence.

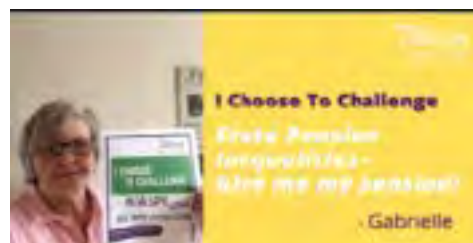
We need to highlight that abuse, whether it's physical or mental abuse, or it's sexual harassment to women and young girls, it is wrong and it is everyone's responsibility.



International Women's Day: International Women's Day virtual event took place on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> March. The theme of this year's IWD was 'Phenomenal Women'. Deborah Yapicioz, Joint Chair of the Regional Women's Committee spoke at the event and focused on those women in NI who work in the Health and Social Care system, both within the NHS and those in the Independent Sector, and the need for change – better pay, terms and conditions, childcare and flexibility.



To mark IWD, UNISON's Women's Committee held an online event on the evening of 10 March entitled 'A Celebration of Women'. The theme also included a woman's covid journey in Health (presented by Deborah Yapicioz), in Education (presented by Anne Taggart and Catherine McKenna) and in the Community & Voluntary sector (presented by Anne McVicker and Helen Crickard). Entertainment was provided by musician Ursula Burns 'Dangerous Harpist', Emer Maguire, stand up comedian and Fidelma Carolan, stand up comedian.



The event was a huge success and enjoyed by all who attended.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions also organised an event to celebrate International Women's Day, 'Leadership, Women and Change – in work, in society and in trade unions'. It covered how women are bringing about change in trade unions, work and in society and what needs to happen. Speakers at the event included:

- Patricia McKeown, UNISON Regional Secretary;
- Sabrina Ryan, SIPTU Organiser
- Patricia King, ICTU General Secretary
- Margaret Coughlan and Geraldine Alexander, Joint Chairs of the ICTU Women's Committee
- Julianne Bir, ETUC

- Chidi King, ITUC
- Ethel Buckley, SIPTU Deputy General Secretary
- Clare Bailey, Chair of the NI Assembly Women's Caucus and Green Party Leader
- Fiona O'Loughlin, Chair of the Oireachtas Women's Caucus

Rachel Killen, Committee member from the Newry & Mourne Branch took part in the ICTU Women in Leadership Course.

### *Campaigns*



WASPI - Good news for WASPI women from the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman who has found that the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) took too long to respond once it knew a significant proportion of women born in the 1950s were unaware of the changes to their state pension age following legislation introduced by Parliament from 1995. 3.8 million women in the UK were affected by these changes, with approx 5,000 UNISON female members in Northern Ireland being affected.

The UNISON NI Regional Women's Committee WASPI group took a lead role in campaigning and raising awareness on this issue by running workshops and encouraging our members to send thousands of complaint letters to the DWP along with other WASPI women across the UK.

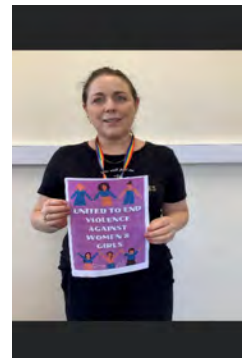
Well done to the NI Women's Committee activists who kept Branches updated, ran the workshops, marched in rallies, spoke to elected members, took part in Radio and TV

interviews to raise awareness and stood outside the high courts at the various Judicial Reviews.



Violence against Women and Girls Strategy - Northern Ireland is the only part of the United Kingdom that does not have a specific strategy dedicated to tackling gender-based violence to help bring an end to violence against women and girls.

UNISON NI Women's Committee is calling on the Assembly to act and develop a strategy that brings NI in line with the same standard as the rest of the UK.



Make Misogyny a Hate Crime - Hate crime legislation in Northern Ireland is linked to sectarianism, racism & homophobia. UNISON NI Women's Committee calls for Misogyny to be added to the legislation. This means that when a woman is a victim of a crime such as assault or harassment because she is a woman, the law will recognise that. Make Misogyny History!





Relationship, Sexuality Education (RSE) - UNISON NI Women's Committee support the Raise Your Voice Campaign calling for comprehensive, statutory, standardised Relationships & Sexuality Education in all schools in Northern Ireland. This will ensure that young people will embark on healthy and safe adult relationships.



End Femicide in Turkey Campaign – An open letter was sent from UNISON to express our outrage of the ongoing treatment of women in Turkey. Over 250 women have been murdered this year in Turkey and many reported rapes and sexual assaults. UNISON Women's Committee supported the campaign to end femicide in Turkey and around the world. Committee members attended UNISON's International webinar, "The Struggle for Human and Workers rights in Turkey".



UNISON Women's Committee members attended the relaunch of the Feminist Recovery Plan produced by the Women's Policy Group.

UNISON Women's Committee members attended a "Writing Effective Motions" course in September to assist with future conferences.

The work of the Women's Committee is supported by Danielle McCusker, Area Organiser.

## North West

It's been an exciting year of progress for the North West Women's Committee despite the continued restrictions imposed by the Covid Pandemic.

The highlights of the first few months of 2021 included a very well-received virtual seminar to celebrate International Women's Day with an excellent mix of internal and external speakers. Topics covered included women and racism; anti-racism and education; embedding diversity and changing the culture of a male dominated occupation; women: boomers, the sandwich generation and society's unpaid carer workforce; women's experience internationally; women working in health; the experience of African and Caribbean women in maternity and ways that women are intersectional.

The event also celebrated the launch of the first Women in UNISON Recognition Scheme to celebrate the extraordinary contributions

women made to their branch, members, or the wider union during the first year of living through Covid. General Secretary Christina McAnea accepted an invitation to announce the overall winner and two runners-up at the Committee's July 2021 conference, held on the theme of Empowering Women Emerging Stronger from a Pandemic World. A special tribute was also paid to a late member who continued to support UNISON and her community despite contracting Covid twice until she sadly died of the virus after being admitted to hospital on Christmas Eve. The scheme was so well received it is to become an annual event.

The regional women's conference provided an opportunity to address some of the pressures the Pandemic has put on women's professional and personal lives and what can be done to address this. One of our objectives was to conduct a survey of all NW women members to identify these pressures but as other surveys were conducted by the TUC and UNISON regionally and nationally we focussed instead on inviting speakers to talk about the importance of mental health and steps to improve it; research by the University of Lancashire on women's experiences during and after the Pandemic and research by the Fawcett Society on how we can build on what's happened to work towards gender equality through policy changes. The conference was very well received with comments including "amazing", "totally overwhelming" and "very inspiring and emotional". Christina McAnea spoke about wanting to work with regional women's committees to improve equality across UNISON and this is something our Committee is keen to support.

The Committee set up four working groups, each led by a different member of the Secretariat, to deliver specific on-going campaigns which will be developed further during 2022.

A life-saving cervical cancer campaign was launched on social media in April 2021 with a petition asking women to lobby their MPs to make it possible for under 25-year-olds to be able to ask for a smear test if they presented with symptoms and their GP or nurse believed they should have one. Since the age for a smear test was put up to 25 in 2004, the number of women dying from cervical cancer has almost doubled even though cervical cancer is preventable in 99.7% of cases. There is no requirement for a change to legislation, the guidance issued to GPs simply needs to be broadened. Hundreds of women supported the campaign, generating 665 signatures on an electronic petition and using Twitter, Facebook and other digital platforms to share personally recorded video clips. They made such an impact that the Committee was contacted by a national charity that had seen a feed on Twitter and wanted to get involved. The Committee is now in discussions with this charity to find the best way for both organisations to work together to achieve our mutual goal to prevent women of all ages needlessly dying from cervical cancer because screening examinations are not being given. We also hope to work with the BMA to reach GPs.

The growing number of Employment Tribunal cases involving women being unfairly dismissed because of going through the menopause has brought the impact menopause symptoms can have in the workplace into even sharper focus. Several of the 23 women who have volunteered to sit on our North West Menopause Action Working Group have stepped forward to look for ways to address the issue because of being subjected to unfair treatment personally or because they've represented women who have been unfairly targeted. At the working group's request, training on the menopause and how it can affect women at work was provided at two sessions in August and all 40 places were snapped up within days. The group regularly shares information on the menopause and is looking at ways to take

their work forward. They created a special newsletter to celebrate World Menopause Month in October.

In the wake of UNISON branch officials and reps reporting unprecedented contact from members about domestic abuse during the Covid-19 Pandemic, and a marked increase in traffic to UNISON's learning pages by reps searching specifically for resources and materials to help address domestic abuse, our Domestic Abuse Working Group held a hugely successful Learning Lunch in early October. Recognising that both employers and trade unions have a role to play in preventing abuse, we invited HR representatives to attend alongside activists. Jess Phillips MP, Shadow Minister for Domestic Violence and Safeguarding, provided a video message and powerful presentations were given on the statutory guidance on domestic abuse, the role of a domestic abuse champion, a personal perspective on surviving domestic abuse and the training and support available for survivors and perpetrators. 88 people attended the virtual event and requested copies of the materials used. The Group intends to continue working with employers to produce model workplace domestic abuse policies and to assist the regional training officers to promote further training on this issue for both men and women.



As well as attracting new, less experienced women to the work of the Committee, we have worked to retain more experienced

women. Women who attended the Stage 1 Women into Leadership training back in Jan 2020 have been working together towards Stage 2, providing continuity in a way that hasn't been tried before in the North West. These women supported each other as they worked through the learning modules by reading Women and Class. Three training sessions culminated in a working group visit to Glasgow on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> October 2021. They aim to cascade their knowledge to inspire more young members to come on board. Work is underway to develop a reference library at UNISON's Regional Centre in Manchester, with an opening planned for International Women's Day 2022. The Stage 1 Women into Leadership training was run again in Liverpool in November 2021 and the Regional Training Officer has agreed to provide bespoke training on the specifics of the role of the Women's Officer for new and existing officers.



The Committee intends to continue to provide leadership training due to the high demand and the need to encourage more women to have the confidence to stand for more positions at branch and regional level to address the inequalities that still exist. Women currently undergoing the Stage 2 leadership training have started work on developing a 'A Charter for Women' and

intend to make resources available to encourage women to share their learning experiences and learn more about the history of women activists who have gone before them.



Mapping identified inequalities between the number of male health and safety officers and reps compared to women, and the absence of a women's officer in some branches and so we hope to recruit more women health and safety officers and reps and encourage them to tackle specific issues, such as the effect of the menopause on work and ill-fitting PPE designed for men's bodies, once they've undergone the required training. The Smear on Demand Campaign will continue until we meet our aim and the Domestic Abuse and Menopause Action, Women in Leadership working groups will continue to meet while the volunteers want to remain engaged.

Several women from the North West are delegates to the National Women's Conference and we have put forward 5 motions that will help to shape our work for 2022. Our activities will also reflect the national women's committee's work programme. As ever, we will continue to encourage more grass roots women to get involved and assist us to fight for improvements for women everywhere.

## Scotland

Due to the pandemic and the work commitments of Scottish Women's Committee members the committee has only met sporadically during the last year. Committee office bearers participated in the Equality Liaison and Service Group liaison meetings that took place during the lockdowns.

However, a virtual women's conference was held on Saturday 2nd October with roughly the same number of women joining the conference virtually than we would normally see in physical events. The meeting was addressed by Christina McAnea, General Secretary and David Martin and Lauren Strain from Thompson solicitors. There was lots of discussion about mandatory vaccines for care staff. Christina's presentation concentrated on how we build on the skills of our women members and get more women, particularly low paid women involved in the union. A new women's committee was elected but there are a number of vacancies so by-elections will be held.

The Women's Committee also sent a large delegation to the STUC Women's conference which took place virtually at the end of October. The Theme of the conference was "Women Organising Against Discrimination at Work" and all affiliates were asked to only send one motion for debate rather than the two that would generally be submitted for a physical conference. Whilst there was a wide range of motions debated by the conference, the virtual nature of the conference and the need to pre-notify speakers before the conference meant that there wasn't the level of contributions that there would normally be. UNISON Scotland submitted a motion entitled "Time for Change, Women, Discrimination and Intersectionality" which sought to get the STUC Women's Committee to fully consider how they could be more diverse and incorporate more black, disabled, LGBT+ and younger women's voices in their



work as traditionally UNISON is the only union which sends a delegation which has reserved seats for women from our other self-organised groups.

Davena Rankin was re-elected to the Women's Committee and she will be joined by June Maguire from Edinburgh University. Katrina Murray was re-elected to the Standing Orders Committee.

## South East

During the Covid-19 pandemic, our members have faced unprecedented challenges in every aspect of their lives, and UNISON has been there for them. The Regional Women's Committee (RWC) were a big part of that; identifying issues that affected women in their branches, steadfastly holding employers to account and making sure that Women's Health & Safety was addressed in schools, care homes and hospitals throughout the South East. Despite the pressures everyone was under, new Branch Women's Officers were appointed, and many new female Health & Safety reps were nominated, trained, and equipped to tackle the prevailing issues.

Throughout 2020 and 2021 members of the RWC have been involved in instigating branch-based recruitment and organising online events. Branches are closer to full implementation of Menopause Policies and Domestic Abuse policies, and this is largely due to the unstinting work undertaken by members of RWC.

In 2020 the number of branch women's officers in the South East has increased from 68 to 75. This is an increase of over 10% in one of the most difficult years we have ever faced. This is testament to the continuing activism, encouragement and sheer hard work of our women activists, so many congratulations to everyone who helped to

talent spot colleagues and encourage these women to take up the challenge.

### Training

Although, sadly, some events at the beginning of lockdown had to be cancelled (such as the 2020 Equality Conference and The Big Weekend planned for May 2020) the RWC adapted quickly to circumstances and swiftly moved training and workshops online, these included:

- Online induction of new Women's and other Equality Officers.
- An array of webinars for members and activists across the SE region such as Domestic Abuse Awareness, Menopause in the Workplace, Mental Health Awareness, Dealing with Stress and Wellbeing, Racism in the Workplace, The Equality Act, Transgender Awareness, Redundancy, Cancer in the Workplace, and Coping at Christmas.
- A series of webinars aimed at supporting members facing change, including Debt Management, CV Writing, Interview Techniques, Digital Skills, and Confidence Skills.

We have used other training opportunities to further the RWC objectives such as regional Negotiating Skills course where participants were asked to negotiate new or improved Domestic Abuse policies and to monitor and assess policies already agreed.

The resurgence in the Black Lives Matter movement was fully supported by UNISON and by members of the RWC who attended some of the training provided throughout the year and made valid contributions, sharing their knowledge and experiences with other members.

The regional Education Team has negotiated a free, level 2 NCFE accredited, online/distance learning course on Domestic Abuse awareness which will be offered to all members.

## **Regional Women's Forum**

Traditionally this was held at Eastbourne, but due to the pandemic it was held online in both 2020 and 2021.

In 2020 we organised a brilliant weekend October 2 and 3, with guest speakers National Women's Officer Josie Irwin, and Chair of the Women's Parliamentary Labour Party, Rosie Duffield MP. They led a panel event along with our Chair, Sandra Charles, and discussed "The impact of Covid-19 on women and low paid workers." And a lively debate ensued.

The Forum was really well attended and up to 25 women members participated in the webinars on:

- Women's Health & Safety
- Women and Sleep
- Tackling the Discrimination Facing Black Women and Increasing Activism in UNISON
- Maternity Rights

The Women's Forum in 2021 started with a panel discussion entitled 'Back to Work as Normal?' and we were lucky enough to have a panel event featuring UNISON National Women's Officer Josie Irwin, and TUCs Nikki Pound. After an introduction from Regional Women's Committee Vice Chair, Debbie Hollingsworth, we held a minute's silence to remember all those women who have died or suffered abuse and violence in the last year.

Nikki opened the panel event and spoke about issues including the inequalities exposed and worsened by Covid, the need to campaign for misogyny to be considered a Hate Crime, and the need for employers to take Long Covid seriously. Nikki also talked about the reduction of Universal Credit and how it will impact the many women who receive in-work benefits.

Josie spoke about the issues faced by working parents and pregnant women, UNISON's dismay at the further delay of the Employment Bill and the disappointment that the government response to calls for improved Flexible Working has only resulted in a "right to request" from day one.

After a Q&A session and a break we split into groups to discuss the difficulties facing women members in our region. Themes that arose included allyship, white privilege, issues with Shared Parental Leave regulations, and the hopes and fears around hybrid working which will benefit some women and cause detriment to others.

After rounding of the Friday with an educational quiz we held two webinars on the Saturday morning on:

- Endometriosis
- Imposter syndrome

While we enjoyed and learnt a lot from the online forums, we are very much looking forward to the face-to-face forum booked for the first weekend in April 2022.

## **Regional Participation Project**

The SE Regional AGM in February 2020 agreed on a motion on potential barriers to participation in the union's activities and to a project to identify and tackle the barrier to participation in the region and to make any recommendations for change to a future Regional Council AGM. The RWC continues to be supportive of this important project by engaging in the working group and regularly discussing it at committee meetings. We realise that we must do all that we can to create a culture and structures within the region that truly encourage all groups of our membership to come forward and contribute to the working of the region. UNISON was founded on principles of equality, proportionality and fair representation and as such it is particularly important to the RWC that the barriers to women members are

removed so that they can fully engage with democracy within the region.

## **South West**

Our 2020 South West Women's Committee AGM took place on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 2021 online due Covid 19 Restrictions. The AGM in March was well attended, and all seats were filled.

We had Francesca Martinez as a guest speaker which everyone enjoyed, she spoke on the impact of COVID and Violence against Women. Gloria Mills joined us to speak on Pensions and Josie Irwin on the work UNISON has been doing supporting the Domestic Abuse Bill as it progressed through to law.

International Women's Day in March saw the South West offering a range of learning for women to celebrate the day with a day workshop on women, work and health and safety to bite-size confidence sessions and a quiz.

The Women's Committee met on 22 May 2021, this was the first meeting for a lot of new members of the committee, so we used it as a training session for all involved about how the Regional Women's Committee works and the roles and responsibilities on the committee.

The committee continued to meet virtually as restrictions were still in place in line with national guidance.

The Equalities team ran a number of courses including branch women's officers training, and a session to develop a better understanding of UNISON's structures. We have been using these sessions to support more women to develop their skills and confidence for women's representation and to ensure the priorities of women are raised at all levels. Women are still underrepresented and women's seats,

particularly low paid women's seats, remain vacant.

The Women's Committee met again in July and began to plan for a Regional Women's Conference to take place on the weekend of 9 and 10 October. We had hoped this would have been an in-person event with the usual range of speakers, workshops and plenary sessions. However, when we met in August the committee members had very mixed views about whether we would be able to hold the in-person conference in the way we hoped. Reluctantly the committee have decided to postpone bringing the Women of the region together in person for now.

We are looking forward to 2022 already and the National Women's Conference in Edinburgh which is scheduled for the 17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

The Women's Committee will hold a Pre-Conference Meeting and Training Session which will be open for all delegates and visitors from the South West on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2022. This will be a great opportunity for Women to connect with each other going to the conference in advance. More details will be sent out before the end of the year.

The Annual General Meeting for 2021 was also held online on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2021 yet again due to Covid restrictions. As well as the business of the AGM Heather Wakefield, a former UNISON member was invited as our special speaker from Maternity Action, the organisation that have supported many women through the pandemic and continues to do a fantastic job in what they do. We encourage everyone to affiliate or donate to the organisation.

## **West Midlands**

The West Midlands Regional Women's committee have continued to meet throughout 2021 albeit virtually.

We hosted a laughter workshop in March to celebrate International Women's Day. The workshop was much needed and well received. The facilitator Janice Brough has been used by other branches to provide similar workshops.

The committee has met on 4 occasions. We have discussed the difficulties and benefits of home working, ways to increase the number of women health and safety reps and the region's health campaign in which the region used a double decker bus to visit many keep hospital sites across the region and engage with our members in health who are predominantly women. The committee decided to support a motion brought by Birmingham Healthcare to Regional Council on Abortion Clinic Buffer Zones to become one of the region's motions to National Women's Conference.

We held our Regional Women's Day in October 2021 again this was a remote event. Zaf Akhtar from Thompsons joined us to talk about employment law and women. Zaf talked about the challenges for women around COVID and flexible working. We then held a session on Women's Health and Safety including some break out groups on how we might engage women more effectively in the issue of health and safety. The committee have decided to include health and safety as a

standing item on their agenda. As this was not a face to face meeting the committee decided to make a donation of £200 to There For You which is about the equivalent we would have spent on a buffet.

We look forward to moving back to face to face meetings in 2022

## **Yorkshire & Humberside**

This year has been a challenging one across the board for UNISON members. Many of the members of the Y&H women's group work in essential services, in particular health and care and police employers, the group's priority has been to support these members through on-line meetings where possible. The group have embraced new technology and are looking at ways to make future meetings more accessible to all our women members. They are active at regional and national level, but haven't had opportunity this year to extend training opportunities for women within the region.

Across the region our women members continue to be at the forefront our campaigns and have been at the frontline in supporting our members and branches through this difficult time.

We look forward to 2022, focussing on the work plan which will be finalised at the AGM and continuing to support our regional and branch campaigns.

## CONFERENCE REPORTS

### Special delegate conference

**15-17 June 2021**

***Delegates: Tansaim Hussain-Gul, Yve White***

This year's SDC was held online due to Covid19, it started with the president Josie Bird opening the conference by "We are pioneer's this week". It is the first time that the national conference of activists had gone virtual.

The SDC was filmed from a studio in TUC Congress House in London, where Josie was joined live by her vice presidents Sian Stockham and James Anthony, UNISON general secretary Christina McAnea and former general secretary Dave Prentis.

The motions were prioritised from the ballot results received from regions, NEC, SOG, and other committees.

Josie paid tribute to Dave Prentis, who retired as UNISON general secretary on 31 December last year. Josie presented him with an honorary life membership of the union.

Day one of the online conference had some teething problem with voting counts not being registered but this was soon rectified. They also brought in independent scrutineers to double check the votes to make sure that votes were registered and counted correctly.

The conference began with Motion 72 Branch funding, supporting our branches, this was carried by a 60% vote and 40% against. This motion was a two-year work of the branch resources review team, with a blueprint for helping branches to better organise in the future.

The motion was proposed by UNISON president Josie Bird, who led the review team

of 24 lay members. Their work considered the results of a branch survey, interviews with branch secretaries and conversations with over 3,000 activists in over 50 events.

Tansaim moved motion 32 Covid19 and Domestic Abuse – a perfect Storm, this motion was overwhelmingly carried by over 99.89%.

Yve moved motion 64 No going backwards on gender equality which was carried as well.

There were approximately over nine hundred voters who voted in the special delegate conference.

Day two conference was opened by our very own General secretary Christina McAnea who urged the government to bring forward the start of the Covid public inquiry, and invest in the public services that have kept the UK running during the pandemic.

Christina McAnea said she was incredibly proud to be speaking to us as the first woman general secretary in the history of our union. Christina stated that so much has happened in the two years since our last conference. Brexit, the Tories who have now got a massive majority in Westminster, and lives have been turned upside down by the pandemic. She continued to say that so many lives have been affected by this terrible virus, and we have lost our dear ones from friends, colleagues and family members.

Christina also acknowledged how Covid brought out the inequality at home and around the world. It's highlighted the racism and discrimination that is all around us, which has had a disproportionate impact on black people, women, disabled people and those on low incomes.

The conference continued with remaining order of business and continuing with the motions until end of conference.

It was a new experience for all of us, but many shared the same sentiment that having a face to face conference is the best way, even though having a virtual one is good for future use as a part of reasonable adjustment for those who are unable to physically attend the conference.

The virtual conference is very tiring for those with disability needs, and having to watch a screen all day, even though appropriate breaks was provided, but I don't see this being the new way forward as you don't get the same feeling when you are at a conference, the cheering, the clapping, the interaction with other delegates is just on another level.

## Self organised group conferences

### Disabled members

**30 October-1 November 2021**

***Delegate: Karen Narramore, Amanda Brown***

Conference started with a Panel Debate on Post-Covid Bargaining for Disabled Worker's Rights.

Speakers included:

- Jon Richards, Assistant General Secretary, who spoke of the need to fight for those whose needs are best met by working from home, but to be aware of the wider issues at the same time, and not to allow employers to close offices and force people to work from home, when this may not be the best option for a disabled worker.
- Gloria Mills, National Secretary for Equalities highlighted the sad fact that 6 in 10 who have died of Covid are disabled. She gave a very inspiring contribution which covered her own Trade Union journey. She stressed the importance of good health and safety, pointing out that

a lot of people have had huge exposure and insufficient protection from Covid, and the need for robust risk assessments and building on the post-Covid bargaining strategy. She suggested that addressing the disability pay gap should be a priority, the disability pay gap being 20%. Gloria also advised that we need to be using Section 10 of the Employment Rights Act, covering the right to be accompanied at grievance and disciplinary meetings as a useful tool to build density by gaining entry to workplaces (particularly in the private sector) where we do not have free access.

- Sian Stockham, TUC Disabled workers committee covered the TUC priorities for post-Covid bargaining for disabled workers rights. These include decent sick pay and better occupational sick pay. She called for much stronger enforcement of the Equalities Act 2010, so that employers cannot get away from making reasonable adjustments. The TUC also want to make disability pay gap monitoring and reporting a mandatory requirement.
- Dierdre Costigan, National Officer for Disability and Equality, discussed the Government Disability Strategy, which was delayed by Covid and eventually released in July 2021. This is sadly lacking in anything concrete to help disabled people in the workplace. There is no move to increase statutory sick pay, and they have refused to improve enforcement of the Equality Act. Nor are there any additional rights to disability leave for assessment or rehabilitation. She asserted that the Government Strategy is smoke and mirrors. Dierdre reported that UNISON is working with other organisations and have released a Disability Employment Charter, which 40 organisations have signed up to, including some private sector employers. The charter is on the website, and she urged delegates to ask employers to back it.

- A question and answer session followed

On Sunday morning, Andrea Egan, Senior Vice President addressed Conference. Prior to start of conference, there had been canvassing outside the hall by supporters and opposers of Emergency Motion 2, entitled “NEC Resolutions – Not in Our Name’. Those in support had distributed placards saying, “not in our name” and encouraged delegates to hold them up while the Vice President was addressing Conference, and to remain silent with no applause after her speech.

Whilst appreciating that emotions were running high and there were strong feelings on either side of the issues raised in the motion – we, the NWC delegates, did feel that this treatment of the woman Vice President, who was addressing the Conference for the first time, was disrespectful and unsisterly.

Andrea nevertheless addressed what must have seemed a somewhat hostile audience and spoke with dignity on the impact of Covid on disabled members. She spoke of the need to negotiate new ways of working, and to campaign for the right to work from home by those who need to, but not forcing work from home on people.

We then moved on to debating motions. All the motions debated were carried.

On the final day of conference, delegates watched a video on COP26, expressing that governments have done too little too late. Delegates were urged to spread the word and participate in the Global Day of Action for Climate Justice on 6<sup>th</sup> November. Solidarity was sent from Disabled Members Conference to all those campaigning for climate justice.

Christina McAnea, General Secretary addressed the conference via video link. She had been due to attend the previous day, but unfortunately had to curtail her train journey due to severe rail disruptions. She advised

that Unison is continuing to call for an urgent public inquiry as to why two third of people who died during the pandemic were disabled people. She spoke of Unison’s campaigning during the pandemic and explained that Unison was a founder member of the Disability Employment Charter which was launched last week. She criticised the Government’s Disability Strategy, judging it to be a great disappointment, and the Government plan for social care, which is also woefully inadequate, with no clear strategy on how to fund improved social care.

Many women movingly shared their personal experiences when speaking to the motions. These included women suffering from the effects of long Covid. We heard from a young woman with autism, who had been forced out of many jobs before finally getting a diagnosis after 24 years.

We also heard some dreadful examples of the insensitive treatment towards disabled women – for example a disabled woman raising access needs at a concert, being asked if she had a ‘badge or certificate to prove she is disabled!

Despite the appalling weather, it was an interesting and useful conference. It was good to attend a real conference for the first time in well over a year, and to see people face to face again. Due to Covid restrictions, there were no fringe meetings or workshops, which made it a different experience than usual.

Thank you to the National Women’s Committee for the opportunity to attend on your behalf.

## Service group conferences

### Special Energy Conference

**10 June 2021**

***Delegates: Alice Bremner Watt, Louise Andrews***

There was a different feel to this year's Energy Conference, which was to be expected given its virtual nature, with good aspects as well as things that could perhaps be improved in any virtual conferences to come. It ran smoothly, and it was comforting to see a little bit of normality in the proceedings, with the top table meeting in person, albeit socially distanced. It was particularly good to see a high percentage of women in the room, always a welcome sight. Despite the unique circumstances, everyone was engaged and showed a commitment to change within the sector which as we know is sorely needed across a host of issues.

Our motion, 'Addressing inequality in the Energy sector after Covid - we need more female engineers in the energy sector', was first up, discussing the gender pay gap in the industry, as well as solutions to the dearth of female engineers in the energy sector. We called on the Energy Executive to:

1. Ensure that closing the gender pay gap is included as a priority in both national and local bargaining in the energy sector.
2. Work with the sector to develop visible female role models, encourage flexible working and change recruitment practices to attract women to work in traditionally male roles such as engineering.
3. Work with the National Women's Committee to encourage energy branches to participate in UNISON's national gender pay gap trailblazer project.

It was well received and passed unanimously. There were no other tabled speakers, which was a theme throughout conference. The prebooking system for speaking was needed to ensure proceedings ran smoothly, however it did seem to limit speaking on motions where the input of other members would have been interesting and conducive to developing solutions using viewpoints that we perhaps hadn't considered before.

The other motions, particularly those raised by National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender plus Committee, Yorkshire - Humberside Region, National Disabled Members Committee and National Black Members' Committee respectively, were also well received, and intersect with many interests of the National Women's Committee as you might expect. The motions on Net Zero and carbon neutrality, which will affect us all but as always will inevitably affect women disproportionately, were heartening to hear too.

All in all, another successful conference covering a wide variety of issues, and the National Women's Committee look forward to working with the Energy Service Group Executive to realise the goals as set out in the motion.

### Special Water, Environment and Transport Conference

**12 June 2021**

***Delegate: Caroline Pintar***

At the conference I moved motion 6: a sustainable future for Water, Environment and Transport workers - we need more female engineers in the energy sector. This is a subject close to my heart as a female struggling to make headway in the transport industry. I've been a massive transport geek since childhood, when my dad used to take me to vintage bus rallies, but when I



expressed an interest in a transport career I was told it's not for girls.

Thus I went in a different direction then at age 40 fell into a temp job at West Yorkshire Combined Authority which led to my current position promoting sustainable travel and public transport to businesses, a job I love because I get to talk about buses and trains all day. However, the Combined Authority takes a very traditional approach to recruitment and in order to move into more transport focused positions insists that you have a relevant planning or project management qualification.

So at the ripe old age of 46, working part-time, with a 2 year old daughter, and despite having a good crop of qualifications in other fields, and 5 years experience in travel planning I'm having to debate whether it's worth my while going back to uni yet again to do a planning course. It's a big decision to take, but how else do I move up the food chain into positions where I can influence transport policy and make more of an impact.

Interestingly, the new Mayor of West Yorkshire, Tracy Brabin, when she was introduced to us at the last all staff meeting, spoke about the book 'Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Designed for Men' by Caroline Criado-Perez. The book highlights how the lack of females in engineering roles has effectively excluded us from planning processes and led to our marginalisation in many public spaces. Anyone trying to push a pram or a wheelchair around will know what I mean.

I am pleased to say that the motion was carried and that UNISON will now ensure that the gender pay gap is included in pay negotiations and to encourage workplaces to adopt recruitment practices that enable capable females to progress through non-traditional routes in our industry.

## **Special Local Government Conference 13 June 2021**

***Delegates: Sharon Foster and Emma Procter***

UNISON's Virtual Special Local Government Conference (SLGC) and procedures was called under Rule D 1.2.1 by the National Executive Council. This is due to coronavirus restrictions on large gatherings and the on-going uncertainty surrounding being able to meet in large groups, for the first time in UNISON's history.

The theme of conference - The future of Local Government in a post-pandemic world, including organising and recovery in schools.

President Josie Bird opened conference with a call for delegates to observe a minute's silence, to remember all those who have lost their lives during the pandemic.

Whilst acknowledging the devastating impact that COVID-19 has had on staff, over the last 15 months that none of us has experienced before and no one would wish to again, we would all have had our own experiences of death, grief, illness and certainly isolation. We can relate to and share the thoughts and feelings of the many thousands of people across the country who have been through the same thing – a shared feelings of grief for the people who have died during the pandemic.

Josie also paid tribute to local government workers' crucial role keeping the country going during a year like no other and that COVID-19 has had a massive effect on our working lives, and in some cases some of those changes are likely to be permanent. Adding the important role delegates' contributions play as a way of demonstrating and celebrating the importance of local government workers during the most difficult of times.

Conference saw our new General Secretary Christina McAnea address conference where

she emphasised the need for Local Government services to be properly funded in order for essential services to be provided for those who need them.

Motions successfully carried at Conference – voting was done electronically

- Motion 25, (Amendments 25.1, 25.2) - The Future of Local Government
- M 29 – Developing and expanding social partnership and fair work in Wales and across the UK
- Motion 28 – Covid Legacy
- Motion 36, (Amendment 36.1) – Education Support Staff and the Need for Comprehensive State Education
- Motion 24 - Traveller Communities
- Motion 26, (Amendment 26.1) - Local Government and Climate Breakdown
- Motions 30/31(Composite B) - Local Government Funding & Cuts
- Motion 35 - Facility Time in Schools
- Motions 38/40/41(Amendment 41.1)-(Composite C) - Social Care
- Motion 22 - The Future of Youth Services
- Motion 33 - Adult Education Needs Investment
- Motion 10 – Work Related Stress in Local Government
- Motion 4 -The future of the National Joint Council for England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- Motion 15 - Standing Up to Violence, Harassment and Abuse of Local Government Staff
- Motion 1 - Unity Against Public Sector Pay Freeze – South East Region
- Motion 12 - Health & Safety and safety reps in local government after Covid – an opportunity to recruit and organise women workers – (*National Women's Committee, moved by Sharon Foster*)
- Motions 3, 5, 5.1(Composite A) - A pay strategy for organising and industrial action in local government

- Motion 2 – Food Standards Agency & Conditions
- Motion 11 - Covid-19 hasn't killed sexual harassment at work – it's just moved online – (*National Women's Committee, moved by Emma Proctor*)
- Motion 20 - Homeworking as a reasonable adjustment in post-COVID local government workplaces
- Motion 21 - LGBT+ inclusive policies in Local Government
- M 13 - Reduction in the Working Week – Campaigning Across the Sectors
- M 9 - For Fair Public Sector Funding and Against a Public Sector Pay Freeze
- Motion 16 - LGBT+ workers health and well- being
- Motion 19 - Accessing reasonable adjustments during Covid-19
- Motion17 - The Challenges and Opportunities for an Ageing Workforce in Local Government
- M 34 - Reduce agency working in Further Education Colleges

Sharon and Emma were pleased that to be able to take part in the virtual special conference and had the opportunity to move the NWC motions which was overwhelming carried.

As Sharon said, 'The SLGC certainly looked and feel very different to what I'm used to however, I still saw that passion from delegates moving their motion and how important it was for them having that platform to discuss the issues affecting our members. This has given us more confidence to continue to shape how we work in the future especially after the pandemic.'

Thanks to Sharon for this extremely comprehensive report, and Emma had so little to add apart adding the note with regard to Motion 11.

The only query that might be added was that on virtually every motion there were some

delegates voting against. It was unclear if this was genuine opposition or some quirk of the electronic voting, though the latter is highly unlikely. Would delegates at a physical conference be visibly voting against or merely not vote?

## **TUC women's conference**

**3-5 March 2021**

**NWC Delegate: Emma Procter**

The conference was great and was very well structured. Attendance was up compared to when it was a face-to-face conference. The debate at the 2021 TUC women's conference was centred on the following three topics:

- The unequal impact of Covid-19 on women
- Ending gender-based violence and harassment
- Strengthening women's rights and representation at work.

Davena Rankin spoke on the debate of the unequal impact of Covid-19 on women, Margaret McKee spoke on ending gender-based violence and harassment and Sian Elliot spoke on strengthening women's rights and representation at work. Davena Rankin chaired the session on Strengthening women's rights and representation at work.

## **TUC Congress**

**12-14 September 2021**

**Delegate: Sharon Foster**

Congress kicked off with a packed agenda in a very different style. The 153<sup>rd</sup> Annual TUC Congress was online due to the Pandemic and social distancing in line with government guidance. This gives every trade unionist a

chance to get involved, connect with one another and showcase the importance of trade unionism.

Motions – 18 Composites was agreed for debate and was successfully carried. Debate on motions/amendments started with Climate Emergency, Health and Social Care and Building a Bigger, Stronger Trade Union Movement.

Emergency motions – the General Purposes Committee (GPC) approved 2 emergency motions

- National Insurance Funding for Front Line Service
- Defending rail jobs and services – (the GPC supports the motion with a general statement).

Key Speakers at Congress includes -

Frances O'Grady – address to Congress on key issues that is being talked about in our workplaces and even around the kitchen tables up and down the country. What we've learned from the pandemic, what needs to change and how working people can win a fair deal. The TUC is calling for a rise in capital gains tax to fund social care.

The Government may be thinking how to protect supply chains and fill vacancies, what they need is to invite unions in with employers to get us around the table; let's make that industry deliver decent conditions, direct employment and a proper pay rise after decades of real wage cuts and falling living standards. The furlough scheme may not be perfect, but it saved nearly twelve million jobs and helped our economy bounce back faster. It was a great UNION idea, and a great UNION achievement.

Total union membership is rising especially among women, the face of our union movement is changing, and Britain's two biggest unions are led by women; twenty-first century trade unionism. In the pandemic,

unions have shown the value we bring, when we are in the room and our voices are heard. There are millions who don't get decent sick pay and have no choice but to keep on working to feed their families and when schools and childcare closed, it's the working women who picked up the slack. The Government chose not to see that structural racism in the jobs market, which means for many Black workers, it's still a case of 'Last in, first out' as our anti-racist task force shows, Black and ethnic minority workers are concentrated in key worker jobs that's more at risk of the virus, more likely to get it, and more likely to die.

Kier Stammer, MP Leader of the Labour Party addressed conference – he was pleased to be speaking from a podium as he had to address Congress last year from his attic. He extended his congratulations to our new generation of union leaders, elected in the past year - Paul Fleming (Equity); Christina McAnea (Unison); Gary Smith (GMB), and most recently Sharon Graham, having two female General Secretaries leading major unions is hugely encouraging to see women is increasingly leading from the front at the head of our major trade union organisations. He thanked all key workers for displaying the dedication, strength and hard work to get us through the pandemic and paid tribute to the unions for being by their side every step of the way.

The Government lack of support in what they have done for those key workers, and the chaos where the incompetence, complacency and lack of leadership from Boris Johnson the Prime Minister, has created unfair outcomes for everyone else - crisis for the second year in a row, asking teachers to pick up after the Government's mess, and resulting in state school pupils falling further behind their private school peers. A failure to prepare for the lack of HGV drivers, retailers from supermarkets to fast food restaurants report shortages not seen for decades and chaotic approach to the hundreds of Afghans who

stood by Britain in protecting our officials and worked with our troops being let down and left behind. Including –

- 1 in 10 at risk of fire and rehire.
- A cut of £1,000 a year in the incomes of working families on Universal Credit.
- A broken promise on national insurance, raising taxes on working people.
- Failure over 18 months to increase sick pay, putting workers in the impossible position of choosing between going to work and feeding their family, or isolating at home and protecting our public health.
- An unjust pay cut for our key workers in the public sector for - carers, teaching staff, police officers. This is the thanks they get from the Conservatives. He asked that instead, let us work together to secure a better deal for working people. He thanked our affiliated unions for their efforts and their contributions in helping to develop Labour's new deal for workers and building our shared vision for a better future, a Labour government under his leadership will strive for better prospects and dignity for all workers, not just those with a degree and we'll do it by supporting industries that create quality jobs.

International Support - short messages of support was sent to Congress by our International trade union sisters from Sergio Nobre, Natalina Lourenco and Rosana Fernandes of CUT Brazil.

Fringes

A wide range of fringe events took place over Congress for everyone to join the debate around key issues for the trade union movement both in the UK and around the world includes:

- Long Covid and Women's Health and Safety in the Workplace – a discussion of the effects of long covid, the disproportionate impact on and the challenges facing women, and how experiences during the pandemic highlight the importance of women's health and safety as a workplace issue.
- Achieving Gender Equality in Pensions – the gender pension gap is the percentage of difference in pension income for female pensioners compared to male pensioners. The discussion was how we can campaign for changes in policy and behaviour to close the gender pension gap and achieve pension equality.
- Stop fire-and-rehire – Employers have increasingly turned to fire-and-rehire as their tactic of choice as they have sought to level down pay and benefits.

TUC polling found that one in ten workers have had their terms and conditions downgraded in this way since they start of the pandemic. We heard about what is going on in workplaces, how unions are fighting back and how the practice could be banned.

- Jobs, workers' rights and Brexit
- Social Care: a new deal for the workforce
- Fighting back against the far right for LGBT+Equality
- Labour's Trade Policy: Putting Workers First (Emily Thornberry MP, Shadow Secretary for State for International Trade made up the panel)
- A new deal for workers
- Tackling Structural Racism at Work

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE 2021/22

### Regional Representatives

Eastern	Sam Reed, Jenni Tinsley
East Midlands	Jay Cooper, Nathalie Birkett
Greater London	Gloria Hanson, Rose Minty-Tutton
Northern	Alison Chisnall, Rugare Chifungo
Northern Ireland	Deborah Yapicioz, Anne McVicker
North West	Sharon Allen, Elizabeth Cameron, Karen Narramore
Scotland	Jean Kilpatrick, Katrina Murray
South East	Tania Earnshaw, Sandra Charles
South West	Amanda Brown, Sharon Foster
Cymru / Wales	Carol Roberts, Sheryl Perrett
West Midlands	Carol Sewell, Jenny Martin
Yorkshire & Humberside	Gill Garnett, Magda Lezama, Anne Cherry

### Others

National Black Members' Committee	Annette Heslop, Mo Tsentides
National Disabled Members' Committee	Susan Parkinson
National LGBT+ Committee	Emma Procter, Jackie Lewis
Young Members Forum	Millie Davidson
NEC	Becky Brookman, Alison Dingle and Catherine McKenna
TUC co-optees	Margaret McKee, Davena Rankin

### Staff

National Women's Officer	Josie Irwin
Assistant National Officer	Bukky Akinwale

### Constitution of the national women's committee

#### Representation

Regions with up to 100,000 women members	Two seats
Regions with more than 100,000 women members	Three seats
Other self-organised groups (SOGs)	Two for each national committee
National young members forum (NYMF)	One seat
National executive council	Three seats
UNISON members of the TUC women's committee	

All posts are open to job share.

Each region and self-organised group may nominate a substitute.

When electing representatives, regions are reminded of the requirement to achieve fair representation for the low paid, part time workers, shift workers, Black women, disabled women, lesbians, bisexual and transgender women. Where regions are entitled to three representatives, the third seat must take into account fair representation.

**Term of office:** The committee is elected every two years, taking office after national women's conference.

**Length of service:** Regional, SOG and NYMF representatives shall serve no more than two consecutive terms on the committee. This is to encourage and enable more women to become involved in UNISON activities at a national level.

Once a regional, SOG or NYMF representative has served on the national women's committee, they must take a break of at least one two-year term before they are eligible for re-election either as a full member or substitute to the national women's committee, regardless of their nominating body.

**Quorum:** The quorum for meetings of the committee will be no less than one third of the members, excluding the chair.

**Meetings:** The committee will meet no less than four times annually. Further meetings will be held on the recommendation of the committee.

**AGM:** The annual general meeting of the committee will be the first meeting after national women's conference.

**Chair and vice-chairs:** The chair and two vice-chairs shall be elected by the committee at the AGM.

**Voting:** Voting will be by show of hands. A ballot can be held on more sensitive issues, with the consent of the majority of the committee. In the event of a tied vote, the chair will have the casting vote.

**Minutes:** The minutes of the previous meeting will be circulated at least 14 days prior to the meeting. These will be scrutinised for accuracy and, if accepted, signed as a true record.

**ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS OF THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE**

Meetings were held in March, July and November and a conference planning meeting was held in August.

<b>Nominating Body</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Possible</b>	<b>Actual</b>
Eastern	Sam Reed	4	1
Eastern	Jenni Tinsley	4	3
East Midlands	Karen Skeldon	3	0
East Midlands	Nathalie Birkett	4	1
East Midlands	Jay Cooper	1	1
Greater London	Gloria Hanson	4	4
Greater London	Rose Minty-Tutton	4	4
Northern	Alison Chisnall	4	4
Northern	Rugare Chifungo	4	3
Northern Ireland	Deborah Yapicioz	4	3
Northern Ireland	Anne McVicker	4	4
North West	Sharon Allen	4	4
North West	Elizabeth Cameron	4	3
North West	Karen Narramore	4	4
Scotland	Jean Kilpatrick	4	2
Scotland	Katrina Murray	4	4
Scotland	Vacancy	0	0
South East	Tania Earnshaw	4	4
South East	Sandra Charles	4	3
South West	Amanda Brown	4	4
South West	Sharon Foster	4	4
Cymru / Wales	Carol Roberts	3	1
Cymru / Wales	Sheryl Perrett	3	2
West Midlands	Carol Sewell	4	3
West Midlands	Jenny Martin	4	4
Yorkshire & Humberside	Gill Garnett	4	3
Yorkshire & Humberside	Magda Lezama	4	4
Yorkshire & Humberside	Anne Cherry	4	4
NBMC	Annette Heslop	3	3
NBMC	Mo Tsentides	3	0
NDMC	Susan Parkinson	4	2
NDMC	Vacancy	0	0
NLGBT+	Jackie Lewis	4	4
NLGBT+	Emma Procter	4	4
Young Members Forum	Millie Davidson	4	1
NEC	Becky Brookman	2	1
NEC	Alison Dingle	2	2
NEC	Catherine McKenna	2	0
TUC	Margaret McKee	4	3
TUC	Davena Rankin	4	3



## **Glossary**

D&O	NEC's development and organisation committee
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
FRMC	Finance & resource management committee (UNISON)
LAOS	Learning and organising services (UNISON department responsible for member training)
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
LLL	Lifelong learning
MPU	Membership participation unit (UNISON department with equalities remit)
NBMC	National Black members' committee
NDC	National delegate conference
NDMC	National disabled members' committee
NEC	National executive council
NEC ELC	National executive council equality liaison committee
NWC	National women's committee
NWO	National women's officer
NYMF	National young members' forum
PDCC	NEC's policy development and campaigns committee
RWC	Regional women's committee
RWO	Regional women's officer
SOG	Self organised group
TUC	Trades Union Congress

## **Commonly used terms**

Self organisation	Groups facing discrimination meeting and organising to determine their collective agenda and feeding it into UNISON's structure.
SOGs	The four self-organised groups: defined by UNISON national rules as women members, Black members, disabled members and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members.
Positive action	Action to combat the prejudice and discrimination experienced by members of the self-organised groups.
Self-definition	Right of people to define themselves, e.g. as disabled or lesbian.
Proportionality	The representation of women and men in fair proportion to the relevant number of female and male members of the electorate – UNISON has a rulebook commitment to proportionality.
Fair representation	The broad balance of representation of members of the electorate, taking into account such factors as age and low pay, the balance between full-time and part-time time workers, manual and non-manual workers, different occupations, skills, race, sexual orientation, disability and gender identity – UNISON has a rulebook commitment to fair representation.

## UNISON Organisation

National delegate conference	Supreme decision-making body of UNISON – annual conference of branch delegates at which the self-organised groups have representation.
NEC	National Executive Council – elected body of lay members.
Lay member	A member who is not an employee of the union.
Lay structure	A body that does not consist of employees of the union.
Regions	UNISON is organised into 12 regions around the country, each with their own regional office and staff.
Service groups	<p>UNISON organises members in the following services – energy, health care, higher education, local government, police staff, transport, community and water and environment.</p> <p>The service group has autonomy to decide the group’s general policy and negotiate on behalf of their members. Each service group has an annual conference of delegates which sets the group’s agenda for the following year.</p>
Sector	A sub-group of a service group, e.g. the nursing and midwives sector of the healthcare service group.
Code of good branch practice	A set of guidelines, including a chapter on self-organisation, drawn up by the NEC which it considers desirable for branches to follow.
UNISON InFocus	Monthly magazine for stewards and activists
UNISON efocus	Weekly email to stewards and activists
U magazine	Quarterly magazine for all members
Labour link levy	A fund made up of contributions from opted-in members used to support the Labour Party.
GPF	General political fund: A fund made up of contributions from opted-in members used for non party-political campaigning.

### UNISON resources supporting women members



UNISON's women members have successfully negotiated in the workplace on key issues such as domestic abuse, equal pay and maternity rights. Our self-organised group of UNISON women members at branch, regional and national level campaign for equality in the workplace and for improvements to women's rights in the workplace and in the wider community.

Within the work of the national women's committee, many useful resources have been developed to support the work of union reps, activists and branches.

#### **[unison.org.uk/women](http://unison.org.uk/women)**

This is the website section for women members and women's self-organised groups. Useful resources can be found listed at the bottom of the webpage.

**Email:** [women@unison.co.uk](mailto:women@unison.co.uk)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/unisonwomen](https://www.facebook.com/unisonwomen)

**Twitter:** [@WomenInUNISON](https://twitter.com/WomenInUNISON)

**Website:** [www.unison.org.uk/women](http://www.unison.org.uk/women)

Printed and published by UNISON, UNISON Centre, 130 Euston Road, London NW1 2AY.  
CU/December 2021/26651/UNP 16032/800.

